PATHWAY TO GOD

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Prayer

to Lord Rudra Shiva

(Stanzawise Translation in English)

नमो दुन्दुभ्याय चाहनन्याय च ।।१ ।।

I salute the Lord who exists in the sound of the (war) drum, as also in the sticks that beat the drum.

नमो धृष्णवे च प्रमृशाय च ।।२ ।।

I salute the Lord who is bold and courageous (in war) and who wipes out the enemy forces.

नमो दूताय च प्रहिताय च ।।३ ।।

I salute the Lord who serves to advance the purpose of others as well as to put them in their path of welfare.

नमो निषंगिणे चेषुधिमते च ।।४ ।।

I salute the Lord who holds the Sword as well as carries a quiver of arrows.

नमस्तीक्षणेषवे चायुधिने च ।।५ ।।

I salute the Lord who has sharp arrows as well as many other weapons.

नमो स्वायुधाय च सुधन्वने च ।।६ ।।

I salute the Lord who possesses the best of weapons as well as an excellent bow.

नम: स्त्रत्याय च पथ्याय च ।।७ ।।

I salute the Lord who walks through the streams as well as by the streets.

नम: काट्याय च नीप्याय च ।।८ ।।

I salute the Lord who frequents the mountains or the foot of mountains.

नम: सूद्याय च सरस्याय च ।।९ ।।

I salute the Lord who exists in the water of small ponds as well as large lakes.

नमो नाद्याय च वैशन्ताय च ।।१० ।।

I salute the Lord who exists in big rivers as well as rivulets.

नम: कूप्याय चावट्याय च ।।१ १ ।।

I salute the Lord who exists in wells as well as small ponds.

नमो वर्ष्याय चावर्ष्याय च ।।१२ ।।

I salute the Lord who exists in the form of water that rains or that which is standing in tanks and lakes.

नमो मेघ्याय च विद्युत्याय च ।।१३ ।।

I salute the Lord who exists in the clouds and the lightning .

नमो ईध्रियायचा तप्याय च ।।१४ ।।

I salute the Lord who exists in the clouds of the summer as well as the winter.

नमो वात्याय च रेष्मियाय च ।।१५ ।।

I salute the Lord that exists in the rains that accompany the winds as well as the violent storms.

नमो वास्तव्याच वास्तुपाय च ।।१६ ।।

I salute the Lord who exists in human habitations as well as acts as the protector the houses.

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Thus Spake Gurudeo ....

A consciousness of our own sins might also enable us to realise God, as it did in the case of Augustine. Augustine led a very sinful life in the beginning, and so his mother Monica went to her teacher, St. Ambrose, and asked him in what way her son could be saved, and she began to shed terars. Then, St. Ambrose, replied, "Weep not my Sister; the child of these holy tears shall never perish." And we know that St. Augustine became the second founder of Christianity. Having led a life of sin in the beginning, he later became one of the great Saints of the world. So, even a consciousness of our own sins, provided we mend our ways and never return to the bad life again, provided we go forward courageously on the path of virtue, then, that consciousness will serve as a sure incentive to the consummation of our spiritual life.

[pp 23-24]

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This is the kind of self surrender of which Surdas is speaking in the poem सुना रे मैंने निर्वल के वल राम. Unless we realise our absolute impotence before the majestic power of God, it may not be possible for God's Grace to descend upon us. When the great elephant, Gajendra, was full of arrogance and power, and when he was on the point of being killed by the great alligator, he found that his own efforts were of no avail, and as soon as he began to utter the name of God with full devotion, God came to his help when he had uttered the single syllable रा, before even he had uttered the full name राम.

This is a sort of a Samadhi Alankara in which a totality of conditions is not required for the production of effect, but a fraction of it might suffice.

- p.p 181-182

[From Pathway to God in Hindi Literature]

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EDITORIAL

Spiritual Effort

Man lives as a human being without the spark kindled in the spirit for many births. Many saints & yogis have said that they have spent a number of births without becoming aware of the spirit. Saints and yogis can remember their past births in the same way that we remember what we did in the yester year or the years before. When the brain gets rid of the crowded and confused state of the multifareous human activities it gets the clarity and transparency to retrieve the sights of past births as if they have happened in the recent past. Unless the man gets beyond the existence of the gross body and acquires consciousness of the inner self, the awareness of spiritual life and its progress do not take place.

Man loves his bodily activities and the human life so much that he spends many births in a similar way and he does not see any higher goal to human life. Its only when he gets rid of his selfishness and nurtures equality with all beings, becomes morally straight and inculcates in his behaviour the vedic precept of ''speak the truth and do your duty honestly and sincerely'' (सत्यं वद धर्मं चर) that he is able to see beyond the activities of the gross body, and the inherent seed of spirituality sprouts and the spiritual progress begins to appear. He meets some guru to guide him or God himself provides the necessary guidance. Then only sincere devotion to God above all things of family life and meditation bear fruit.

In to-day's world, Bhakti or meditation on the name of God is taken as the easiest path for spiritual progress. As a matter of fact, it is the most difficult of all paths. What a common man in society understands by the word "Bhakti" (Devotion to God) is the worship of God for a few minutes or an hour with flowers and prayers to see him through family difficulties and for more family prosperity. However true Bhakti is devotion to God only, above all the affection for oneself or one's family. For him all the duties and obligations he has to carry out in the society or the nation are secondary in the sense that he carries them out as work of God in the most sincere way possible, while his first love is towards God alone for all the time. This behaviour automatically engenders in him the principles of Karma-yoga, namely, truth, dutifulness and sympathy and equality towards all. Then, whether he spends time in worship of god, bedecking him with flowers and singing prayers or meditation on his name is not of importance, as God dwells in his mind all the twenty four hours whether he is busy in his duty or partaking social or family life. This is the ideal placed before us by king Janak, the Pandavas in Mahabharat, Samarth Ramdas Swami, the Sikh Gurus, Ramkrishna Paramhaṁsa, Sant Tukaram, Mirabai, Tulsidas, Kabeer, Eknath, Dnyaneshwar and many others in various ways.

The most important activity for spiritual progress is thus to bring in one's behaviour morality, sincerity, dutifulness, truthfulness, equality towards all and surrender to God. Gurudeo Dr. Ranade used to say that "man gets morally liberated" meaning the same thing.

In Mahabharat, when king Dhrutarashtra came to know that Duryodhan got Shrikrishna's army on his side while Arjuna got Shrikrishna himself on his side though with a vow not to fight, he became uneasy and restless and could see the defeat of Duryodhan as a writing on the wall. The fact that invincible persons like Bheeshma and Drona are on his side, could not bring him any solace.

He then called Vidura and asked him to tell him something that would calm down his mind. Vidura then tells him words of wisdom about morality, behaviour and justice. This was later known as Vidur-neeti. But Dhrutarashtra was not satisfied. He then requested the king to listen to the words of advice from sage Sanat Sujātā. On being asked by the king, how to reach the sage, Vidura tells the king to concentrate on his name, and the sage will appear in person. The king describes his inability to do so in the distressed condition of his mind. Then Vidura himself concentrates and the sage appeared before them. The sage was the immortal son of Brahmā and looked very young in spite of reaching the status of a sage.

The sage recited to the sorrowing anxious and dejected king, the excellent truths of Vedantic Philosophy. He said that the knowledge, confined to words and intellect is incomplete and will become complete only when it becomes part of one's conduct. Spiritual perfection is attained only by self-discipline and seeking good of all. It is particularly important to avoid anything in one's behaviour that can be called self-centered attitude and something that is injurious to others in any form. One who knows merely the words of the Vedas, cannot be said to know the knowledge (the Brahman). However, if one is established in Truth, then can be said to know the knowable.

Those who have knowledge of the metrical composition of the Vedic mantras can perform yadnyas properly but cannot be regarded as knowers of the vedas. On being asked by the king if a Vedic scholar does unrighteous acts, does he have to suffer the consequences of his actions or will his scholarship protect him, the sage replied that no one can take liberty in the matter of one's conduct. The law of Karma applies to everyone without exception. The vedas never rescue from sin the deceitful person living by deceit. The sage lays stress on the purification of heart by cultivation of virtues and the desire to do good to all. One who understands that the same Atman is in all beings and further that Atman and Brahman are identical, will experience spiritual bliss all the time and in this very life.

Looking to modern science, one finds that research studies are being made through latest techniques of brain-scanning of persons of different life styles and practices to seek the key to real happiness. Neuro-scientists have found out that certain areas of brain light up constantly in Buddhists and not just when they are meditating, which indicates positive emotions and good mood. The left prefrontal lobes are linked with positive emotions, self control and balanced temperament. The experienced Buddhists are thus less likely to be shocked, flustered, surprised or as angry as other people. The most reasonable hypothesis is that there is something about conscientious Buddhist practice that results in the kind of happiness we all seek. The research says that meditation and mindfulness can tame the amygdala, an area of the brain which is the hub of fear memory. The research thus indicates that one should imbibe in one's conduct and behaviour the virtues that purify our heart and cultivate self control and positive attitudes.

The spiritual effort should therefore be to mould one's conduct and behaviour to get rid of self centered attitudes and entieing worldly activities and reach a state of serene equaminity. All other things like Nama-japa, worship, meditation and different yogas are but means towards the end.

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Tulsidas goes on to say ... that if any one comes in the way of our God - devotion, we must renounce him. Say Christ also, in a similar manner, "leave off they father and thy mother and follow me". Ramdas has said that we should not mind renouncing our dearest relatives, provided we can secure the friendship of God: देवाच्या सख्यत्वासाठी । पडाव्या जिवलगासी तुटी ॥ Carlyle also expressed the same sentiment : "He who does not believe in God is our enemy. Our only business is to fight him to the death; We may see by reference to the Bhagawadgita also how it regards God-devotion as the supreme virtue. If we follow the argument of the twelfth chapter of the Bhagwadgita, we shall find that in the last eight verses, Bhakti is regarded as supreme among all virtues, other virtues being only aspects of it.

[pp 60-61]

(Pathway to God in Hindi literture)

New Trustee of A.C.P.R. Belgaum

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(Continued from last issue)

Eternity Compressed in Time :

My Reminiscences of Shri Gurudeva

Shri Gurudeva takes up the poem, "नवधा भगति कहऊँ तोहि पाही", in which Tulsidas sets forth his doctrine of Bhakti as a diamond with nine-fold facets. In the beginning, Shri Gurudeva points out that Tulsidas is closely following Valmiki's 'Adhyatma Ramayana' in describing his scheme of nine-fold Bhakti. Some scholars have called Tulsidas as an incarnation of Valmiki. However, Shri Gurudeva tells us that it would be too much to say that Tulsidas as an incarnation or avatara of Valmiki in the absence of any factual evidence. According to him, we might very well regard him as a literary Avatara of Valmiki in as much as he clothes in Hindi garb most of the ideas and sentiments found in Valmiki. Tulsidas has adopted the whole scheme of the Adhyatma Ramayana in Toto, though there are a point or two of excellence in Tulsidas, and a point or two of excellence in Valmiki's Adhyatma Ramayana. Shri Gurudeva puts together the two schemes of Bhakti propounded by Valmiki and Tulsidas, groups them in a logical order, and brings out the three strands of development in the nine-fold scheme. These strands are called the "Contributory", the 'Essential' and the 'Effective'. Under the Contributory head come the moral virtues necessary for spiritual life, the chief among them being अमान (absence of any sense of self-importance), विरति (dispassion), संतोष (contentment) and परदोषादर्शन (absence of the fault-finding in one's fellow-beings). Tulsidas advises us to add one instance of a virtue to another, day after day, so that the virtue concerned becomes established in us. He uses the terms 'निरन्तर' (continually) and 'बहु कर्मा'. ''Aethos is Ethos''. Character is habit. So the cultivation of moral virtues in general constitutes the first kind of Bhakti according to Tulsidas.

Under the 'Essential' head come three different kinds of Bhakti viz., 'संतन्ह कर संगा'(the company of the saints), 'गुरूपदपंकजसेवा' (the service of the spiritual teacher) and 'मोते संत अधिक करि लेखा' (to regard one's spiritual teacher as higher then even the Godhead).

Under the ''Effective'' head Shri Gurudeva mentions five different kinds of spiritual virtues which complete the nine-fold scheme of Bhakti according to Tulsidas. ''The first and the second are concerned with the singing of the qualities of God (मम गुण गान) as well as His exploits (रति मम कथा प्रसंगा) and His words or message (व्याख्यातृत्वं मद्वचसाम्). In order that God-devotion might develop in us, we must sing His praise, think of His qualities, narrate His exploits and contemplate on the spiritual words which He might have left for us.'' (Pathway to God in Hindi Literature, pp. 119-120). The third Bhakti is concerned with the uttering of God's name (मंत्र जाप). The fourth and the fifth consist in seeing of God everywhere (मोहिमय जग देखा), and a complete belief in God (मम भरोस). Shri Gurudeva remarks, ''According to Tulsidas, therefore 'मम भरोस', a complete belief in the benevolence and power of God, constitutes the highest kind of Bhakti.'' He recalls how the Vishishtadvaita school also expresses its complete belief in God in the famous words 'रक्षिष्यतीतिविश्वास:',: God is in the heaven and all is right with the world''. He says, ''this maxim ought to direct the aspirant's progress, and help him in his onward march''. (Ibid., P. 120)

Shri Gurudeva contrasts with 'मम भरोस' the views expressed by the sage Narada. According to Narada, the highest kind of Bhakti cannot be defined in terms of 'भरोस'. It must be defined in terms of Prema 'सा त्वास्मीन् परम प्रेम रूपा'. Shri Gurudeva significantly quotes as under from the Narada Bhakti Sutras to bring out the mystical nature of the Bhakti enunciated by Narada : यल्लब्ध्वा पुमान सिद्धो भवीत, अमृतो भवति, तृप्तो भवति ॥ यत् प्राप्य न किंचिद् वाञ्छति, न शोचति, न द्वेष्टि, न रमते, नोत्साही भवते ॥ यज्ज्ञात्वा मत्तो भवति, स्तब्धो भवति, आत्मारामो भवति ॥ After giving certain definitions of the Supreme Bhakti according to Parashara, Garg and Shandilya, Narada ultimately stresses his own view, namely, that Bhakti may be regarded as 'परम व्याकुलता' about God. Without entering into the ticklish question as to whether Bhakti may be regarded as essentially 'भरोस' Or 'प्रेम', faith or love, Shri Gurudeva says, ''Suffice it to say that, according to Tulsidas, 'राम भरोस' is the apex of all virtues. He has already elucidated for us the nine-fold scheme of Bhakti.

Supernal Bhakti, according to Tulsidas, is a diamond with nine different facets, each representing God from its own point of view and all together making up what we may call our devotional attitude towards God. This total devotional attitude, according to Tulsidas, was exhibited by Shabari (सकल सकार भगतिदृढ तोरे). And no person could be regarded as an ideal saint who does not exhibit all these kinds of devotion. (Ibid. P. 121)

After considering the doctrine of nine-fold devotion propounded by Tulsidas, Shri Gurudeva reflects on the virtues, which the Hindi saints, exhort us to cultivate, and the vices, which they want us to avoid. His purpose is to build up synthetically a theory of Ethics based on his analysis of the different virtues and vices discussed in the poems of Hindi saints. Of course, the Hindi saints have not written any formal treatise on the science of Ethics. But Shri Gurudeva points out that their contribution to this science remains truly remarkable from the analytical point of view. His insightful study of the virtues and vices mentioned in different poems of Hindi saints leads him to their enumeration and classification into Individual Virtues, Social virtues and Spiritual Virtues.

Individual Virtues are eight, namely, Activism (करनी), Non-attachment (विराग), Discrimination (विवेक), Self-control (दम), Courage (धीरज), Patience (सबूरी), Sufferance (गरीवी) and Equanimity (समता). Social Virtues are four, namely, Good Company (संतन्ह कर संगा), Sympathy (दया), Benevolence (परहित), and Sacrifice (त्याग). Social Virtues include Celibacy (ब्रह्मचर्य), Penance (तप), Introversion (बाहर जाता भीतर आनै), Study of Philosophy (आतमविद्या), Reverence for the Master (गुरूपद पंकज सेवा), Meditation on God - His Name, Qualities, Exploits and Words (मंत्रजाप, ईशगुणगान, मत्कथालाप, व्याख्यातृत्वं, मद्वचसाम्), Divine Optimism (मम भरोस), and Vision of God everywhere (मोहिमय जग देखा).

Shri Gurudeva then raises the question - Which of these virtues might be regarded as the most fundamental according to Hindi saints ? The question is relevant because each age in human history exhibits its own particular virtue. The Greeks, for example regarded Measure, Order or Harmony as their chief virtue. The Christians regarded Charity as the greatest virtue. When we come to the 18th century, we find that the virtue of that age is the virtue of Benevolence. In the 19th Century stress was laid on Equity. Shri Gurudeva tells us that great philosophers also laid emphasis on some virtue or the other as being the fundamental virtue. Plato, for example, regarded Justice as the highest virtue. Aristotle, apart from his insistence on Magnanimity as the supreme virtue, propounded the doctrine of Mean between the two extremes as the hall-mark of virtue. He also saw, as through a glass darkly, that the highest human virtue may be a contemplation of the Divine Theoria. Other two names in the history of ethical thought are evidently those of Spinoza and Kant. Shri Gurudeva says, "One cannot but be struck by the contributions they made to ethical philosophy by introducing their central conceptions of an Intellectual Love of God and the Kingdom of Ends respectively". He finally mentions Sidgwick's reconciliation of the claims of egoism and altruism in the distinctive doctrine of Philosophic Intuitionism, and Green's budding doctrine of Self-realisation "as the chief lamp-posts of the present day ethical thought".

In this context, Shri Gurudeva seeks "the guiding thread through the list of virtues advocated by the Hindi saints, which might enable us to determine the nature of the central virtue". He finds that the foregoing poem of Tulsidas in which the nine-fold scheme of Bhakti is discussed puts forth God-love as "the central virtue in which are focussed all the virtues that have been mentioned in our inventory, and which thus illumines them all. All virtues, to deserve the name, must merely be expressions, manifestations, or aspects of this central virtue, and all vices only derelictions or aberrations therefrom". (Ibid., I 126)

(to be continued...)

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There is no sin except stupidity
- Oscar Wilde

(Continued from last issue)

Bhagwadgeeta & its exposition by Sant Dnyaneshwar

Chapter VI (ध्यान योग)

The True Yoga

(Sanskrit Script followed by English Translation)

प्राप्य पुण्यकृताँल्लोकानुषित्वा शाश्वतीः समाः ।
शुचीनां श्रीमतां गेहे योगभ्रष्टोऽभिजायते ॥४१॥

Having attained to the world of righteous people and lived there for a very very long time, a man who happens to fall from the path of Yoga, again gets born in a house of such persons who are pure and prosperous (so that he can continue his progress in Yoga further)

Sant Dnyaneshwar explains -

Is it not strange that the heavenly world, which requires a hundred yadnas (sacrifices) to be done even for Indra, the King of gods, is easily obtained by a person who earnestly desires liberation from bondage of this world ? But he is unable to enjoy the heavenly pleasures and thinks why God should allot to him something which he does not desire ? Then he again takes birth in this world, however, in a such a family which is a house of virtue and righteousness and where the growth of his prosperity knows no bounds. The family values, morality and truth, is conspicuous for dutiful behaviour and whose passion is devotion to God. Such a rare family becomes the sojourn of the person who has a fallen from the path of Yoga, only because of his misfortune.

अथवा योगीनामेव कुले भवति धीमताम् ।
एतद्धि दुर्लभतरं लोकेजन्म यदीदृशम् ।।४२ ।।
तत्रं तं बुद्धिसंगयोगं लभते पौर्वदेहिकम ।
यतते च ततो भूय: संसिद्धौ कुरूनंदन ।।४३ ।।

Or he gets born in a family of yogins who are endowed with wisdom and intellect, which is also a difficult occurance in this world (42).

There he regains the impressions of his knowledge obtained in his previous birth and makes further efforts from that stage with renewed vigour to attain success (43)

Sant Dnyaneshwar explains -

Or he takes birth in a family of yogins whose passion is only for knowledge of Brahman, whose attribute is contentment and whose thought process is directed towards the attainment of yoga. In such an atmosphere, he remembers right from his childhood the efforts of his past life and grasps all further knowledge quickly in his very young age itself. Even gods are anxious to get such a birth in this world. Thus, the fortunate person, though he had fallen from his path in previous birth attains all the success, oh Arjuna, very early in this birth, though planned by him in the previous one. (43)

पूर्वाभ्यासेन तेनैव ह्रियते ह्यवशोऽपिस: ।
जिज्ञासुरपि योगस्य शब्दब्रह्मातिवर्तते ।।४४ ।।

By his former practice he progresses instinctively though previously unsuccessful, even if he be only a seeker towards the knowledge of Brahma, beyond the mere ritualistic or descriptive knowledge (and reaches realisation). (44)

Sant Dnyaneshwar explains -

He regains the impressions of his developed intellect of his previous life and progresses further instinctively. His intellect reaches the limits which are generally not possible without learning through the words of a Guru. The senses voluntarily come under the control of the mind, the mind unites with Pranic energy and they together attain the Self. Whatever may be the stages in between, he attains success in yogic practice and the final stage of Samadhi calls on him uninvited. He appears like the godess Parvati at the beginning of the world or Shiva Shankar, the chief authority of all Yoga techniques or the incarnation itself of the total renunciation ever possible in life or an island formed of only the eight fold yoga practice of Patanjali or an instrument to assess the limits of the world. He is as if the scent itself becomming the Sandal wood. Because of his success in Yoga, he appears an image of magnificance in courage or as if he has crossed all the bridges of success.

प्रयत्नाद्यतमानस्तु योगी संशुद्ध किल्विष: ।
अनेकजन्मसं सिद्धस्ततो याति परांगतिम् ॥४५ ॥

But the yogi because of his constant diligence in efforts gets himself free of all imperfections gradually through the many births and reaches the Supreme destination. (45)

Sant Dnyaneshwar explains -

After transgressing the various obstacles in his path during the thousands of births, he reaches the shore of Self Realisation and attains all the necessary stages of Yoga effortlessly. He goes beyond the intellect and the thought processes and attains Brahman which is beyond all thinking processes. All the clouds of doubts in the mind get cleared, the breeze in the air stops and stillness appears in the sky. He thus reaches indescribable bliss.

तपस्विभ्यो अधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोऽधिक: ।
कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥४६॥

The yogi is superior to the ascetic; he is considered greater than the learned scholars; he is greater than the ritualist. Therefore, oh Arjuna, become a yogi. (46)

Sant Dnyaneshwar explains -

Persons with belief in ritualistic devotion continue to strive for the gains they want to achieve; intellectual persons continue with their learned efforts to understand the Brahman; the ascetics travel along the narrow and risky precipice to achieve their goal; the ardent devotees aspire for the love of God. However, the yogi attains the state of Brahman which is the essence of all the above aims and therefore the path of the yogi is superior to all other paths. The yogi's mind progresses to ultimately meet the union of the individual self with the Supreme Self while he continues to live in the body. Oh Arjuna, therefore follow the most superior path of yoga and become a Yogi.

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना ।
श्रद्धावान्भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मत: ॥४७॥

I consider him the most deserving of all yogins whose inner self is always absorbed in Me and who worships me with Supreme faith in Me.

Sant Dnyaneshwar explains -

Oh Arjuna, I consider the yogi as the God of gods, the greatest of my happiness and the very breath of my life. I am in him in form of the union of the devotee, the act of devotion and the object of devotion. The love between him and me cannot be described. We two are inseparable. As if one is body and the other the soul. Such words of Shrikrishna himself multiplied Arjuna's curiosity to know more about the greatness of Yoga. Shrikrishna also felt that Arjuna is the mirror in which he can see himself and his heart gladdened to say more. What he says further will open out the store house of knowledge and bliss. The rain of sublime virtues of Sattva attribute which is required to sow the seeds of spiritual knowledge and to wash away the obstacles in the way of the unwavering attention of the audience is showered by the eagerness of Nivruttinath to sow the seed through me by his blessings. Whatever I will say further to tell the words of Shrikrishna to Arjuna be listened by all of you through the ears of the mind, seen by the eyes of the intellect and assessed by the reasoning power. The words be stored in the heart to entertain the mind, lead one to realisation, remove the difficulties and attain the bliss of the self. I will further tell you what Shrikrishna will tell Arjuna through his words of knowledge.

Thus ends the sixth chapter of Bhagwadgeeta named the True yoga with exposition by Sant Dnyaneshwar.

(To be continued)

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Annyone can become angry - that is easy, but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right, way - this is not easy.”

Aristotle.

Divine Faith as a Shield Against Dangerous Creatures

Faith is a deep inner conviction, a state of super-assurance. When you feel deeply you liberate an enormous energy - (Quoted by Swami Jagadatmananda 1983:204).

Faith in Divine Power has immeasurable potentiality and it works wonders in all aspects of life of devotees and needless to say it protects them even from harmful effects of certain creatures like snakes and scorpions. This paper brings to light at least five such incidences that have taken place in the life of spiritual leaders and followers of Nimbargi Sampradāya with a view to strengthen the faith of the devotees in the Divine Power.

The incidences that follow depict how that saint of Nimbargi escaped from the hissing cobra, and the follower of Chimmad Sampradāya who was saved in spite of the holding hood of a cobra accidentally, Sri Kakamari who did not get up from meditation even after a snake bite, how the anxiety of a mother was overcome whose son was bitten by a poisonous snake, and finally how Gurudeo Ranade remained unaffected even after a scorpion bite.

In the first incidence, how the saint of Nimbargi is saved by a snake has been narrated. In this context, Prof. R.D. Ranade

(1960:188) writes :

He [the saint of Nimbargi] had once gone to an old well for a bath, the way downwards being very difficult; after finishing his bath, he started to go up and had gone a few steps, when he found one dangerous hissing serpent descending with its hood spread out; and thus he found himself in a critical situation. He closed his eyes, and began to repeat the name of God. When he opened his eyes, he found that the serpent was gone. Thus he was protected by God's name. This inspired him to write the poem, *Om nāma kāyuvadu.*[1]

Now I present how the disciple of Chimmad Sampradāya was saved when he accidentally took a cobra once. He mistook the hood of a cobra for a mango on Narasimha Jayanti day. When it came to the notice of his spouse she cried loudly and he threw away the cobra. This is all due to the grace showered by Sri Sadhubua according to the couple (*vide* Dabade. 1998:155). (The disciple of the saint of Nimbargi is Sri Raghunath Priya Maharaj / Sadhubua (1829-1879). Sadhubua initiated Sri Rambhau Yaragattikar (1833-1879) the founder of Chimmad Sampradāya and the saint of Umadi (1843-1914) the founder of Inchageri Sampradāya at the instance of the saint of Nimbargi. Sri Shankarappa Kakamari, Sri Shivalingavva of Jat (1867-1930), Prof. R.D. Ranade and many others are the ardent disciples of the Saint of Umadi).

In another incidence, Prof. R.D. Ranade (*vide* 1960:68) points out how his spiritual brother Sri Shankarappa Kakamari was saved in spite of the bite of a serpent.

At Kakamari - a village in Athani Taluka of Belgaum district, Sri Shankarappa was actually bitten by a sepent, while he was meditating at night near a hay stack in the barn. He did not move[2]. He said, 'If my teacher is worthy of his salt nothing wrong can happen,' and he was saved.

In spite of a serpent bite Sri Shankarappa did not get up from meditation because of his unshakable faith in the Divine Name imparted by his spiritual master. But one cannot assert with confidence that the serpent by which Sri Shankarappa was bitten, was poisonous. However, Sri Shivalingavva records (in Marathi) an incidence in which a boy who was bitten by a poisonous snake was rescued. The sum and substance of the incidence can be outlined in the following manner.

One lady of Jat had a son (boy) of ten years old and a poisonous serpent bit him. The lady came to Sri Shivalingavva around 10 P.M. along with her son who was afflicted with the poison of a serpent. The boy had thrown his neck and closed his eyes. The mother began to cry and became aghast with too much of fear thinking that her son would die. Sri Shivalingavva consoled the lady and applied the holy ash (*Angāra*) of Sri Samartha (the spiritual master) to the boy and then sent them home. Afterwards Shri Shivalingavva intimated that lady to meditate upon the Divine Name till the dawn by taking her son. The lady performed *Dhyāna* of *Ishwara* till the morning by taking her son. The boy went to the school in the morning after informing the mother. The mother grew anxious and began to move to and fro from home to school thinking that when her son would return home. The boy returned home at 10 A.M. and took his bath and then went to the Jangam Muth (where Sri Shivalingavva lived) by taking coconut and camphor. He lit the camphor there and prostrated to Sri Samartha. Thus the greatness of each of the *Leelās* of Sri Samartha is unique and indescribable in words[3].

Finally, it can be observed how Gurudeo Ranade was saved from the toxic effect of a scorpion bite.

Once scorpion had bitten Gurudeo Ranade and he asked his disciple nearby to utter the names of the Nāmadharakās (those who are blessed with the Divine Names) quickly and the disciple did so and the poison due to scorpion bite did not have any effect[4] on Gurudeo Ranade (*vide*,Talegaon 2001:14).

(The above incidences remind us the remarks passed by Sri Samartha Ramadasa, ''Poisons have no effect ...... before the Name of God'' (1988:399).

With this it cannot be stated that the list of the incidences of how on account of firm faith in the Divine Power the devotees are protected is complete in Nimbargi Sampradāya itself and not to speak of devotees of non-Nimbargi Sampradaya. It is desirable to unearth as many incidences as possible of this nature and to present them systematically in order to inspire those who tread Pathway to God.

Notes :

1. The Summary of the song *Om Nāma Kāyuvadu* is follows : God's name is the saviour. Only this name protected the great devotees of ancient times - namely Pradhlada, Ajamila, Droupadi, Gajendra, Dhruva, and ... by Gurulingajangama one acquires the great merit (*vide* Gajendragadkar, Bhagwat 1975:100).

2. Once when the saint of Umadi sat for meditation along with his spiritual teacher a kind of bee (*Gungi Hula)* started boring the thigh of the former. But the saint of Umadi did not get up from the meditation (Deshpande 2001:223). The eye witnesses also reveal that snakes and scorpions used to move freely on his body at times without harming when he used to sit for meditation (especially in the forest)

It is also reported elsewhere that the serpent used to move on the body of Gurudeo Ranade occasionally when he was absorbed in meditation, without doing any harm.

It is also said that when once the saint of Nimbargi came out from a place after finishing his long meditation his entire face was covered with termites!

3. This is based on an unpublished piece of information taken down by a senior lady disciple of Gurudeo Ranade in her note book.

4. When I visited Jangam Muth (where the Samādhi of Sri Shivalingavva is built) - Jat on 9th October 1990, Sri Annayya Mahalinga Swami - the present head of the Jangam Muth explained to me - certain incidences whereby the poison due to scorpion bite was reduced within five minutes after applying Tirtha (sacred water) of the Samādhi of Sri Shivalingavva.

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Gratitude is a fruit of great cultivation, you do not find it among gross people.

- Samuel Johnson

(Continued from last issue)

Śankarācārya's Laghu-vākya-vṛitti

(१०)

मुक्ताभिरावृतं सूत्रं मुक्तयोर्मध्य ईक्ष्यते ।[26]
तथा वृत्तिविकल्पैश्चित् स्पष्टा मध्ये विकल्पयोः ॥१०॥

(In the pearl-necklace) the string covered by pearls can be seen in between two pearls, in a similar way, the Sentience enveloped by the thought-modes (in the intellect) is clearly seen in between two thoughts (10).

Explanation :- In the pearl-necklace, the string covered by pearls is not normally seen. But when two pearls are moved apart, the string becomes clearly visible between two pearls. In a similar way, the sentience underlying the thoughts (see verse No. 8) being covered by thoughts is not observed, but it is clearly seen (i.e. experienced) in between two thoughts i.e. in the intervening time between two thoughts. In the mind-intellect, the thoughts follow one another continuously, yet there is a small gap of time between two thoughts, and is that small gap of time, the sentience can be experienced, as it is underlying all thoughts. Now, this small gap of time between two thoughts is naturally devoid of thoughts, and there the permanent sentience is not associated with any thought, In other words, the pure sentience not associated with any thought is clearly experienced in a state where there are no thoughts.

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(११)

नष्टे पूर्व-विकल्पे तु यावदन्यस्य नोदयः ।
निर्विकल्पक-चैतन्यं स्पष्टं नावद् विभासते ॥११॥

When (in the intellect) a previous / preceding thought has gone out but the next / succeeding thought has not yet arisen, (during that intervening period) the sentience not connected with any thoughts shines clearly (11).

Explanation : A thought arises in the intellect, passes away and the next thought arises. Thus thoughts come and go. But in between two thoughts there is a small gap of time wherein the underlying sentience as apart from any thoughts clearly shines forth.

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(१२)

एक-द्वि-त्रि-क्षणेष्वेवं विकल्पस्य निरोधनम् ।
क्रमेणाभ्यस्यातां यत्नाद् ब्रह्मानुभवकांक्षिभिः ॥१२॥

The persons desirous of experiencing Brahman are to try with efforts, in due order, to check (the flow of) thoughts thus for a moment, (then) for two moments, (then) for three moments (and so on) (12).

Explanation : The sentience that is seen in between two thoughts is the same as the Inner self who is identical with Brahman. So the experience of Sentience is the gap between two thoughts which is devoid of thoughts is the experience of Brahman. Hence those spiritual aspirants who want to have the experience of Brahman have to look at the gap between two thoughts and to try to increase the time gap between two thoughts, for one moment, for two moments, for three moments, and so on. Great efforts are necessary to slow down the thinking process and to increase the gap shorn of thoughts. And this must be done in due order.

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(१३)

सविकल्पक-जीवोऽभ्यं ब्रह्म तन्निर्विकल्पकम् ।
अहं ब्रह्मोति वाक्येन सोऽयमर्थोऽभिधीयते ॥१३॥

This individual soul is (associated) with thoughts; (on the contrary) that Brahman is devoid of (all) thoughts. This fact (that the individual soul dissociated from thoughts is Brahman) is expressed/pointed out by the sentience (namely) I am Brahman. (13)

Explanation :- In the mind-intellect thoughts come and go; there is also in it the reflection of Pure Knowledge (bodhābhāsa) which is the individual soul. Thus the individual soul is accompanied by thoughts. Due to one thought of egoism, the individual soul identifies itself with the body, etc. and with the sentience/Inner self. When this thought vanishes i.e. when there is absence of egoism and other thoughts, the individual soul does not remain different from Brahman that is devoid of thoughts. (This point is further explained in the next verse No. 14).

As seen already the Inner Self is indicated by the word "Ahaṁ" (=I). This "I" is nothing but Brahman. This very fact is indicated by the Upanisadic sentence Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi (= I am Brahman).

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(१४)

सविकल्पकीचिद्योऽहं ब्रह्मैकं निर्विकल्पकम् ।
स्वत:सिद्धा विकल्पास्ते निरोद्धव्या: प्रयत्नत: ॥१४॥

This 'I' (=individual soul) is the sentience accompanied by thoughts. Brahman alone is not associated with any thoughts. (So) the thoughts that are self existent (in the intellect) are to be checked/stopped with efforts (14).

Explanation :- The "I" (= individual soul) is nothing but the pure sentience associated with thoughts, while Brahman is pure sentience not associated with thoughts. So if the thoughts are removed, the 'I' freed from all thoughts becomes identical with Brahman, as both are now only pure sentience. In other words, thoughts are the only hindrance in the relisation of the identity of 'I' and Brahman. So if this hindrance of thoughts is removed, there remains no distinction between 'I' (= sentience) and Brahman (sentience). Hence to realise the oneness or identity of 'I' with Brahman, thoughts must be fully stopped with great efforts. Stoppage of thoughts requires great efforts.

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(१५)

शक्यः सर्व-निरोधेन समाधिर्योगीनां प्रियः ।
तदशक्तौ क्षणं रूद्ध्वा श्रद्धालुर्ब्रह्मतात्मनः ॥१५॥

It is possible to secure Samādhi dear to Yogins, by means of stopping all (thoughts). (Now) if that (stoppage of all thoughts) is not possible, then a spiritual aspirant having faith should check the thoughts (at least) for a moment (and then should try to increase the period of that state devoid of thoughts) and then he will come to know his own nature as Brahman (15).

Explanation :- Full stoppage of all thoughts is nothing but samādhi. This Samādhi is complete cessation of thoughts. This is what is called 'Unmanī' in later literature. Such Samādhi is dear to a practitioner of the path of knowledge (jñāna-yogin). In this state of Samādhi, the individual soul becomes fully identical with Brahman. To secure such a samādhi is not a simple task; it cannot be attained within a short span of time. So a spiritual aspirant should not be disappointed. He can slowly attain to this state. First he should check the thoughts for only one moment; then he should increase this period of thoughtless state. Then a time will come when he is able to check all thoughts and to secure this samādhi and to realise that he himself is Brahman.

In this verse the spiritual aspirant is said to have faith. Faith is one of the requisites for the study of the philosophy of Monism-alone. Faith explained us extreme belief in the sentiences[27] of the Upaniṣads and the spiritual teacher.

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(१६)

श्रद्धालुर्ब्रह्मतां स्वस्य चिंतयेद् बुद्धिवृत्तिभिः ।
वाक्यवृत्त्या यथाशक्ति ज्ञात्वाद्धाभ्यस्थातां सदा ॥१६॥

With the help of the modes of the intellect, is spiritual aspirant with faith should contemplate that he himself is Brahman. Further after knowing the fact by understanding the explanation of the sentience, he should as per his strength/capacity practise (to secure samādhi) (16)

Explanation :- A spiritual aspirant must constantly contemplate that he is Brahman; this is what is called Nididhyāsa. Such continuous contemplation has to be practised as per one's own capacity. This contemplation is possible with the help of a mode of the intellect namely 'I am Brahman'. It is moreover helped by the understanding the correct meaning of the sentience Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi (= I am Brahman). Such constant contemplation is insisted upon in Monism-alone, as it leads to realisation of Brahman. For this, the example of Bhṛṅgī-kīta is given in works on Monism-alone. It is said that by the constant contemplation of bhṛṅgī, the kīta becomes Bhṛṅgī. So also by continuous contemplation, 'I' (= individual soul) becomes Brahman.

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(१७)

तच्चिंतनं तत्कथनमन्योन्यं तत्प्रबोधनम् ।
एतदेकपरत्वंच ब्रह्माभ्यासं विदुर्बुधाः ॥१७॥

Contemplation of that (Brahman), narration about that (Brahman), and mutual enlightenment of that (Brahman) and the whole attention directed only to this (Brahman) are called by wise men the study regarding Brahman (17).

Explanation :- This verse points out how a spiritual aspirant has to undertake a study in respect of Brahman. When he is alone, he should get merged in meditating about Brahman only. When he is in the company of other spiritual aspirants, he should not waste his time in speaking trivial and useless wordly matters; on the contrary, he should speak of Brahman only, discuss Brahman only, and if necessary he should enlighten others about Brahman or he should get enlightened (from others) about Brahman. Or there may be mutual enlightenment of Brahman, on the part of the spiritual aspirants. In short, constant contact with Brahman is the same as the study in respect of Brahman. In other words, a spiritual aspirant must be always engaged with and conscious of the truth, 'I am Brahman'.

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(१८)

देहात्मधीवद् ब्रह्मात्मधी-दाढेर्य कृतकृत्यना ।
यदा तदायं म्रियतां मुक्तोऽसौ नात्र संशयः ॥१८॥

When, like the thought that the body is the Self, there is firm conviction that the Self is Brahman, there is fulfilment (of life of a spiritual aspirant); then at that time if the spiritual aspirant dies, he is fully freed; there is no doubt about this (18).

Explanation :- Due to ignorance, there is super[28]-imposition of the body on the Self, in wordly life. Hence a man is firmly convinced that the body itself is the Self. Such a man never thinks that the Self is different from the body. But there are some spiritual aspirants who are certain that the body is not the Self that on the contrary the Self (Ātman) is Brahman, the ultimate reality, that the Self is identical with Brahman (Ayani Atma Brahmā). When there is such steadfast, firm conviction and actual realisation, the spiritual aspirant's life is fulfilled, he has obtained the ultimate goal of life, his life is meaningful. Now there remains nothing to be gained or obtained. Now his actions are not binding, he becomes 'Free while living' (jīvanmukta). But due to actions that had started his present life (prārabdha), he goes on living till death. Then when he dies, he does not come back to this empirical world again, he is free from all bonds of actions. That is, after death the man who was 'free while living' becomes 'free after death' (videha-mukta). His contact with a body is forever over. His cycle of births and rebirths has completely stopped. He himself has become Brahman. Brahman is eternally free (nitya mukta). So one who has become Brahman is permanently free. None should entertain any doubt about this matter.

(Concluded)

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A Marathi book of Philosophical and Devotional poems by Shrikrishna Kelkar, Jt. Secretary of A.C.P.R. Belgaum was published in Shri Vithoba Mandir, Pandharpur and at Phalton during the Ashadhi Dindi.

Self Reinforcement

''ना ह्यांग बडव''

[The Kannada Poem composed by
the Saint of Nimbargi in the Devanagari Script]

ना ह्यांग बडव । ना ह्यांग परदेशि ॥
नी एन्न सरियविरलु ॥प॥
निनगे क्षयविल्ल । एनगे भयविल्ल ॥
भप्परे एन्नोडेया निजरूप नीनु ॥अ.प.॥

ओडहुट्टिदव नीनु । ओडलिगे हाकुवव नीनु ।
हडेद तायि तंदे बळग नीनु ॥
इंतप्प दोरे नीनु । एनगे इरुतिरलागि ।
बयसिद्दु दोरकुवदु आश्चर्यवेनु ॥१॥

मुंदे नोडलु नीनु । हिंदे नोडलु नीनु ।
एडबल काय्वंथ कर्ता नीनु ॥
गुरुलिंगजंगमन गुरुतु कंडवरिगे ।
गुणवंतरिवरेल्ल माडुवरेनु ॥२॥

How am I a poor man ? And how am I an orphan ?
Whilst O God art Thou with me.
Immutable art Thou and scarefree am I
Whilst only art Thou my very form O Lord;
Can I be a poor man and can I be an orphan ?

Thou art my brother and the one who'ld rear,
Indeed art Thou my father and mother and near and dear;
Whilst such a Lord as Thou art mine
No wonder if I get whatever I aspire !
Can I be a poor man and can I be an orphan ?

Thou art at my back and also at my front,
Indeed Thou shield me from left and right;
O Gurulinga Jangama, what can these 'sensuous' do
To the one who has seen indeed Thy sign !
Can I be a poor man and can I be an orphan ?

Transcreated by

- Prof. Yashwant Achar
H.No.45, Heera Baugh,
Udupi - 576 103.

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All wealth belongs to the Divine and those who hold it are trustees not possessors.

- Shri. Aurobindo

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Friendship that insists upon agreement in all matters is not worth the name. Friendship to be real must ever sustain the weight of honest differences.

- Mahatma Gandhi

To The ATMAN

I Pray for
Opportunity to listen to you;
Ability to obey your Order;
To let my mind be controlled by you;
For
Nothing other than your grace
Can do it.

Let me act
only - as per your directions;
For none else can judge better.

Use me
As an instrument
in your Cosmic Plan
For the benefit of all;
For none other than you
Can be more benevolent.

Tell me who I am,
For none other than you
Can be more competent
To tell this.

- **R. B. Yelburgi**, B.E.(Mech.)
363, Nehru Road, Tilakwadi, Belgaum.

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My First Spiritual Experience

All these days I had heard & read about various spiritual experiences encountered by saints & sages, but had no opportunity to have such an experience myself. A little unusual today; I woke up around 3:00 a.m. and finished my side routines, had a cup of tea as usual and sat for meditation at 3:20 a.m. For the last 3 days. I had become successful in meditating for a full session of one hour in one single sitting. I experienced complete inner silence, which is very difficult to achieve in a short period of regular experience of meditation. I view this experience as a blessing conferred on me by my Guru in disguise, the late Dr. Gurudeo Ranade. I have a feeling that this spiritual experience will go a long way in helping me to achieve further spiritual experiences in the years to come. Thus once again I bow my head to my Guru in reverence.

Jai Gurudeo ! Jai Gurudeo !! Jai Gurudeo !!!

- **Shri S. N. Badaskar**
Pune - 411 002.

19-2-2003

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The question was whether God was to be regarded as superior to the spiritual teacher or not. Ramanand like Kabir himself voted in favour of his spiritual teacher, and so God was left supportless. God then went from teacher to teacher until ultimately he was absolutely ruled out of the spiritual court.

. (pp 339-340) Pathway to God in Hindi Literature

Motilal Banarsidass Publishers [MLBD]

Centenary Celebrations

(1903 - 2003)

at Varanasi

(Monday the 10th March 2003)

In a series of year long functions being held in different centers of the country where MLBD have branches / Offices in connection with the MLBD Centenary Celebrations which were launched in Delhi on the 5th January this year by His Excellency Shri T.N. Chaturvedi, the Governor of Karnataka, another function was held on the 10th March at Varanasi one of the oldest branches of MLBD. The function had the privilege of having His Excellency Shri Vishnu Kant Shastri, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh as the Chief Guest. Prof. Rajendra Mishra, Vice Chancellor, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University was the Chairperson and Prof. G.C. Pande, Chairman, Indian Institute of Advance Studies, Shimla and Prof. Geshe N. Samten, Director, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath (Varanasi) were the distinguished guests.

The programme, organized in the Atisa Hall of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, was conducted by Shri APN Pankaj and a Sanskrit Scholar. The function began with the Governor offering flowers to Saraswati, the Goodess of learning and lighting the lamp. This was followed by Vedic and Pauranic invocations.

Shri Narendra Prakash Jain, Managing Director, Motilal Banarsidass, extended a warm welcome to the dignitaries and the distinguished guests "whose presence in the auditorium and love for MLBD was a matter of great satisfaction and inspiration to the present and the succeeding generations of this pre-eminent publishing house of Indology which has, behind it, the vision, the missionary spirit, perseverance and love for India's cultural heritage of its founding fathers''.

Recalling his forty-four years long and close association with the family and the Establishment of MLBD, Shri A.P.N. Pankaj traced the hundred years' journey of this House, which starting in an humble manner in Lahore in 1903 had become a household name in the Indological Circles in India and the World. He remembered, in this connection, the contribution of the Late Shri Moti Lal Ji, Shri Sundar Lal Ji, and Shri Shantilal Ji. Making a special mention of Varanasi, the timeless city. Shri Pankaj recalled how, following partition, Lala Sunder Lal Ji had come to Varanasi and started again from a scratch and how it remained the family home for the next ten years upto 1958 when they shifted to Delhi and made their headquarters at Bungalow Road. He also spoke of the growing and expanding publishing and export business of the House and mentioned opening of the other branches at Patna, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune, Chennai and Bangalore.

Prof. G.C. Pande and Prof. Samten recalled their 50 years old relationship with the House of MLBD and nostalgically went down the memory lane to share their personal experience with the organization. Prof. Rajendra Mishra, in his presidential address, spoke the valuable services rendered by the organization to the cause of Indology and said that MLBD today was one of the most respectable publishing establishment in the world. He suggested that Indological publishers should publish original Sanskrit Works of the contemporary literatures and scholars of this great language. This alone could ensure its continuity as a living language.

The Governor, in his concluding remarks highlighted the significance of publication of the seminal works by MLBD. He, offering his blessings and best wishes to the House of MLBD, hoped that they would continue their work and serve the country in the future as well with same dedication and zeal. Striking a personal note of gratitude Shri Shastri remembered his student days when he used to derive immense knowledge and benefit of learning from MLBD publications.

One of the highlights of the function was felicitation of scholar - authors associated with MLBD for long. The Governor honoured Pandit Janardan Pandey Shastri, Prof. Vraj Vallabh Dwivedi and Prof. Satya Vrat Sharma by offering each of them a shawl, a momento and a letter of authority which entitled them to procure, free of cost, books worth Rs. 21,000/- during the current year. The Governor also honoured Prof. Rajendra Mishra, as a symbolic gesture of honouring 51 traditional scholars of Kashi, the rest of whom were honoured subsequently. The distinguished guests Prof. Pande and Samten, together with Prof. Mishra, then presented awards to nine old staff members of Varanasi Branch of MLBD.

The function concluded with a vote of Thanks by Shri J.P. Jain, Director, Motilal Banarsidass and was followed by tea.

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Celebrations at Kolkata on Saturday the 22nd March, 2003

In a series of the year long programme being organised in different centres of the country where MLBD have offices, the third function was held today in Kolkata where His Excellency Shri Viren J. Shah, the Governor of West Bengal, was the Chief Guest. The function was presided over by

-Dr. Rama Ranjan Mukherji and Dr. Sitanath Goswami was the keynote speaker. Earlier, similar functions had been held in Delhi and Varanasi, where Shri T.N. Chaturvedi, the Governor of Karnataka and Shri Vishnu Kant Shastri, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, were the respective chief guests.

The function began with the Governor offering flowers to Saraswati, the godess of learning. This was followed by the Vedic Invocation. Welcoming the Governor and the other distinguished guests, Shri N. P. Jain, Managing Director, MLBD, expressed his gratitude for the long and rewarding association of some of the most outstanding and eminent scholars of Bengal among others, with the house of MLBD. If MLBD, today enjoyed a pre-eminent position as Indological publishers throughout the world, credit in considerable measure went to them as well, he said. Welcoming the Governor, in particular, Shri Jain thanked him for readily accepting his request to grace the occasion.

Shri APN Pankaj, A Sanskrit scholar, recalling his forty four year long association with MLBD, remembered its founding fathers. the late Shri Motilal, Shri Sundar Lal and Shri Shanti Lal whose love for India, Indology and the country's cultural heritage guided them through a hundred year long journey of MLBD, starting at Lahore in 1903. He also made a mention of the troubled times of the country's partition in 1947 and how this establishment began again from a scratch in Varanasi and later in Delhi. Today, with its offices, apart from these two centres, functioning in Patna, Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, Chennai and Bangalore MLBD had become a household name among the Indologists all over the world.

Dr. Sitanath Goswami, former Prof. of Sanskrit, Jadavpur University remembered the great traditional pandits of Bengal who rendered a yeoman's service in rediscovering the Indian lore and, remaining anonymous, helped scholars, like Charles Wilkins and Sir William Jones in their monumental contribution to Indology.

The governor honoured Dr. D.P. Chattopadhyay, in absentia, and Dr. Satya Ranjan Banerji, two eminent Indologist authors associated with MLBD. The keynote speaker and the chairperson presented centenary awards to the Kolkata based staff members of MLBD for their valuable services.

Dr. Rama Ranjan Mukherji former Chancellor, Tirupati Sanskrit University, and Ex-vice Chancellor of Burdwan and Rabindra Bharati Universities, recalled his long association with the house of MLBD and paid glowing tributes to Shri Sundar Lal Jain and Shri Shantilal Jain for the remarkable services rendered by them to the cause of Sanskrit and Indic studies.

The Governor expressed his happiness for being invited to participate in the centenary function of India's most outstanding Indological publishers. He recalled his acquaintance with some of the works published by the House and also had a word of appreciation for their latest publications displayed at the function-venue which he had the opportunity to look at.

The function came to close with a Vote of Thanks by Shri R.K. Tiwari a well known lawyer of Kolkata and close associate of MLBD.

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The Stoic Virtuous Man & The Knower of the Absolute

Philosophers of a later Hellenistic school, the Stoics, held that virtue plays a dominant role in the life of the good man. To be virtuous was to be happy and wise. In this state of virtue and wisdom man always did the right thing and he was morally perfect. In accordance to this virtuous, wise and morally good man so eminant in Stoic ethics, is the Hindu sage who has realized the essence of the Absolute. This paper draws attention to the Stoic virtuous man and the knower of the Absolute in the Hindu context.

The Stoics said that the end of life is happiness. Happiness is like a smoothly flowing life (Stobaeus, *Eclogues*, 2,p.7) Such a life is lived in accordance with nature *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta,* edited by J. Von Arnim, 1 179). All the actions of a virtuous man are virtuous (SVF, iii.57-66). Happiness for the Stoics was not gained by possessions. Virtue or *arete* does not depend on possession of the external world but on man's attitude towards them. Strabo comments that for the Stoics the morally good was "to be won" or *haireton* and the morally bad was "to be fled from" or *pheukton.* The Stoics taught that each individual is in possession of *phusis* or growth. *Phusis* regulates life and governs the entire world. The phusis of the world is identical with God, the Fire. The *phusis* of the individual is identified with the *phusis* of the world. Cleanthes the Stoic in his *Hymn to Zeus* says that the entire world is governed by God who is it's sole controller. This view is inkeeping with the Upanishadic teachings. It is established that Brahman or the Absolute is the sole controller of the universe in Kausitaki Upanishad, 3.9, Brahadaranayaka Upanishad, ii.8.1, Chandogya Upanishad iii.14.4 etc. In short, the eternal truth that nothing transcends the will of the Absolute is portrayed as, "from its fear the fire burns, the sun shines and from its fear Indra, Vayu and Death the fifth run on" (Katha Upanishad, ii.6.1 and 3). The Stoic god is soul and body of the universe. Plutarch records what Chrysippus said : "the universe is then its own soul and its own controlling mind" (De Stoicorum Repugnantiis, 41).

The Hindu aspirant is well aware of the nature of the absolute, in whose hands lies the order of life. He knows that, "He is not great by good deeds nor low by evil deeds but it is he wants makes one do good deeds whom he wants to raise and makes him commit bad deeds whom he wants to lower down" (Kausitaki Upanishad, 3.9).

Chrysippus in his 4th book *On Providence* argues that both good and evil a cannot exist. Man inherits a spark of the divine Fire descended into him at his creation. So man is originally good. It is only through contamination with evil that his soul turns into evil. Afterall, the soul of the man is the noblest of all souls. Therefore man who is in possession of a noble soul is morally noble. The virtue so needed for excellence ought to be cultivated and then only will the virtuous man shine out and be known as the good man. Chrysippus also adds that "Vice cannot be removed; nor is it well that it should be removed". They were a pair. He asks what is justice if it isn't the negation of injustice. Similarly, with all opposites.God by necessity allows baseness and evil to grow but men should be tolerant. God is the primal mover who directs the course of men towards good. But men are responsible for their actions and motives. Hence, God and man are inseperable in the Stoic teachings.

The Stoic virtuous man accepts the will of God. On God depends his Fate. Acceptance of what is granted for him is the key to happiness. It provides him protection as well. So he lives consistently with nature. It is a plan or *logos* that he follows. The Hindu aspirant is a perfectly happy and virtuous being. He remakes the world for the welfare of his fellowman. (Brahadaranyaka Upanishad, iii.5). On a similar footing Chrysippus wrote that the virtuous man will be involved in public life. (SVF, iii.697). But the Stoic and Hindu intentions may differ. Involvement in public life, in the Hindu context is done in a disinterested spirit. till the end of the cosmic process. At the end of the cosmic process everything will disappear in to the absolute. The Stoics regarded that all souls, good and bad, perish at a general conflagration.

In the *Hymn to Zeus*, Cleanthes does not hold that man's happiness depends entirely on himself. Happiness is brought out by having the right attitude. Unforseen obstacles may mar the virtuous man's goal in life. But as long as he does not reproach his fate he will be morally happy. One who goes against the Stoic *logos* will be unhappy. *Eudaimonia* or happiness is the main ingrediant necessary for the morally good life. Virtue is the natural object of the rational man. Virtue ought to be improved in order to prolong happiness. Good intentions were sufficient. Man ought to make a choice between good and bad. To be good was to be morally perfect while bad was a word confined to moral imperfection.

The Hindu aspirant who realizes that his soul is pure and identified with the Absolute is in unity with the very essence of the universe. His soul acts in an impersonal manner- sarvarambhaparityagi. Good and evil cause no pain to him (Brahadaranyaka Upanishad, iii.4). His nature is serene for he is virtuous. The Chandogya Upanishad records that, ''only when one's whole nature is purified are the bonds released which keep the soul from God''. (v. 10.7). Inkeeping with this view are the Stoics. The Stoic virtuous man who had freed himself from all evil, (theft and celibacy etc. SVF, iii.421) is free to consume his happiness till the end of the time.

The Stoics did not follow the practice of self-mortification like the Cynics did. But they recognized that habitual indulgence in virtue was necessary. The cardinal virtues of Stoics were, moral insight, courage, self-control, justice. The Stoic good man or the virtuous man was in possession of all these. Cicero in *de Finibus* says that such a good man is named king than Tarquin who was incapable of ruling his own people as well as himself. This is in accordance with the Hindu aspirant who was rightly called *svarat* (Brahadaranyaka Upanishad, iv.4.23).

Seneca in Fr. 17 considered philosophy as a science of conduct. The virtuous man's conduct depends on reason. As man is the only animal who is in possession of the reasoning power it is inevitable that the Stoics pay attention on it. Diogenes Lartius records that ''Virtue is a disposition comfortable to reason, desirable in and for itself and not because of any hope or fear or any external motive''. (7.89).

The Stoics determine that one who indulges in a large number of good acts for unnecessary reasons is still not good. But he was certainly on the way to virtue (SVF, iii.5 12)

Aristotle declares that when man does good acts he becomes good (Nichomedean Ethics, 1106 b 36). Repeated actions of right conduct and moral virtue led the individual towards the good (cicero, de Finibus, 3.20).

The middle Stoa in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. witnessed a departure of the old Stoic ideals and the introduction of the new. Such Stoics as Panetius of Rhodes and Poseidonius of Apamea stand out of this period. Panetius altered the Stoic ideal of the good man to that of the rational perfection of their individual nature. He gave more importance to external good and rejected the ideal of "apathy". While Posedonius laid importance on the one God he also allowed an idea of a dualism permeat Stoicism. Accordingly, there were two divisions of the cosmos-the supralunar and the infralunar. These two worlds bound together in man. Man stands on the borderline between the earthly and the heavenly. Between man and God were demons. They belonged to an intermediate realm. On a similar footing the practical and moral principles of the souls, too, changed.

The Stoic ethical doctrined concentrate on the *logos* of the universe which is linked with God's attention on man. There is an inseperable link between man and God. It is the virtuous man's goal to bend to the will of God and thereby acquire wisdom and happiness. The Hindu sage undergoes a series of ascetic practices. His nature is similar to that of the Stoic virtuous man who is in possession of wisdom and happiness.

The Katha Upanishad notes that : "Blessed is he who takes the good, but he who chooses the pleasant loses the object of man".

Also "The wise by concentrating on the soul knowing him whom it is hard to behold, leaves both grief and joy".

Of the wise man, who resembles the Stoic virtuous and good man, it had more to say : "the wise man is not born: he does not die; he is not produced from anywhere". (Katha Upanishad, 11).

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"Beatification has got a philosophy of its own. I have a long cherished idea that I might be able to write a book on the philosophy of beatification. Beatification might be looked at from six points of view : from the metaphysical and epistomological, from the psychological and mystical and from ethical and axiological. Whatever the point of view, it is beatification that constitute's the ultimate end and it is this that has been aimed at by all the mystics of the world".

- Gurudeo Ranade
in Pathway to God in Kannada Literature

Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati
The Sage of Kanchi

I

At the outset, I submit that it is not easy to write about the saints and sages. They are dimensions of eternity and spiritual geniuses of the human race. They embody all good things. They look upon all as equal. Their teachings are too deep to delve into. But this does not mean that we should be ignorant of their magnificient acts and accomplishments. Prof. T.M.P. Mahadevan beautifully puts it. "Meditation on the lives of the siants and on their teachings is a potent means to elevating our own lives and for gaining sublimity"[1].

II

Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati was the 68th Ācharya in the hallowed line of succession of Śaṅkaracharyas to adorn the KĀMAKOTI PĪṬHA of Kañchi. He was a unique person of rare qualities and remarkable character. He was free from passions like hate and fear. He possessed all the essentials of saintliness and sainthood. Kanchi the famous city of crowning temples was the centre of his spiritual enlightenments. From times immemorial Kanchi has been regarded as one of the MOKSAPURIS of India. Śaṅkara the famous and influential teacher of Advaita Vedānta had intimate connections with this city. He is supposed to have consecrated Sri Kāmākshi and Sri Chakra in Kanchipuram. He is said to have ascended the Sarvajña pīṭha at Kañchi. Thus Kañchi has been the centre of Kāmakoti Pītha. Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati lived there for more than a century and did intense penance (tapas) for the betterment of the whole word.

III

The sage of Kañchi stands for the reinterpretation of *Bhāratīya Vidyā*. It has been the content of a continuous process of interpretation right from the time of the Vedas upto the present day. The teachings, both oral and written, of Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati reverentially called *Paramāchārya* stimulate readers to be conscious of the renascent spirit of India. They ushered in a new era of intellectual, moral and spiritual development. True to the appellation as *Śiṣya Vatsala*, he was known for taking a personal interest in the studies and requirements of the students. His lectures created in the minds of readers a spirit of consecration removing Psychological doubts and aspersions. He asks us to fervently adhere to the permanent values.

IV

Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati is a *Sannyasa* name. In his *Pūrvāśrama* he was named as Swamynathan. He was born on 20th of May 1894, in Viluppuram, a town in the South Arecot district, Tamil Nadu; Subrahmanya Śāstri was his father and his mother was Mahālakshmi. He was initiated into *Sannyāsa* at the age of thirteen, in 1907. He ascended the Sri Kanchi Kāmakoti Pīṭha on 13th February 1907. He became the spiritual leader and was acclaimed as the JAGADGURU, the world teacher.

V

The Paramāchārya then took victory tours *(Vijaya Yātre)* to different parts of the country to bless people, to perform worship for *Loka Kalyāṇa* and to deliver discourses. He offered daily worship to Sri Chandramouli and Sri Tripura Sundari, the presiding deities of the Kānchi Kāmakoti Pīṭha.

Young Āchārya took instructions in Sanskrit classics under the guidance of learned pandits of the pīṭha. He improved his knowledge of Sciences and arts through elaborate discussions with the experts in the field. He acquired encyclopaedic knowledge of spiritual matters. Subrahmanya Bhārati the renowned National Poet, paid respects to the Paramāchārya. The Paramāchārya used to arrange *Sadas* to enable all distinguished scholars to participate. He stood for the propagation of classical learning, arts and Social Service. Pandits and *Sangeet Vidwāns* vievied with one another for rendering service to the pīṭha. People from all walks of life Hindus, Muslims, Christians became his disciples. He arranged to run a *Vedic Pāthaśāla*. Mahatma Gandhi also met the Paramāchārya and sought his blessings. The Paramāchārya took personal interest for the renovation of temples and the regular conduct of the daily worship. He also visited the celebrated Madras Sanskrit College and received benedictions. He was received at *Kāśi* under the leadership of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. He stood for interreligious faith and understanding.

The *Sri Kānchi Kāmakoti Pīṭha*, thus has been a spiritual centre of service and is exerting its utmost to spread *Bhārathīya Vidyā*. Its objectives are the reinterpretation of the Hindu culture in the light of the Universal teachings of

Śaṅkara, the celebrated Vedāntin and a great social reformer. The teachings of the sage of Kānchi reveal the deeper implications and impulsions of *Bhāratīya Vidyā.*

The Paramāchārya, it may be said reflects the greatness of Ādiśaṅkara. The fundamental values of Hinduism, find their prestine Vigour in his teachings. What he has received in meditation has poured out in love for the benefit of the entire mankind. His lectures held audiences spell bound. All news papers, like 'The Hindu' came forward to report these lectures in greater details.

Let us now examine in detail the real import of the teachnings of the *Paramāchārya.* He thinks that Advaita is a ladder to Universal perfection. It declares that the nature of reality is non-dual. That is, Brahman or Ātman. We, in essence, are that. There is no fundamental differences between the human soul and Brahman. Brahman is *sat, cit ānanda.* It is pure consciousness *(Śuddha Chaitanya).* inifite *(ananta).* It is never born and therefore never dies. It is birthless and deathless. It is indestructible *(avināśi).* It is eternal *(nitya).* It is here, it is there. It is self-luminous *(Svayamprakāśa)* and self-established *(Svayaṁ Siddha).* It is unchanging and unchangeable *(Aparināmi).* It is free from all pain, misery, thirst and hunger.

But what has really happened in empirical life? Due to ignorance, the human self fails to know its own real nature, owing to superimposition *(adhyāsa)* man who is Brahman in essence, wrongly identifies himself with the body and hence undergoes all suffering. Ignorance thus is the cause of misery. So Advaita, Vedānta declares that all are of the nature of *Īshwara.* What we see in this world as many are illusory. The real aim of man, is to come out of this suffering caused by the birth and death of the body *(Śarīra)*. The goal is called *Mokṣa*, which consists in realising the eternal nature of the self. There is an indwelling divine soul in man which, in the end must bring him back to God''[2]. Thus for the destruction of misery, Advaita is the best medicine. Even in practical life, we see that if two minds become one, there is no strife.

Thus Advaita, according to the Paramacharya is a grand discipline for the realisation of values. Values go to constitute Reality. Strictly speaking, though the ultimate Reality is *Nirguṇa* Brahman, in popular parlance it is called God. How to come out of the trials and tribulations of life ? What is the way out ? The Paramāchārya says by submitting one's sweet will to the Lord. It is otherwise called *Bhakti* or devotion. *Bhakti* is the essential foundation of the truly Vedāntic life. Man should seek God's grace through worship and meditation. ''Attach yourself to God to be detached from the world''[3]. The quality of life should be improved. The mind should be purified by undertaking meditation; and the purified mind becomes fit to discriminate btween the real and unreal, between the eternal and the non-eternal. This results in the dawn of knowledge. The Paramāchārya says that respect for *Dharma* must be inculcated in the young minds. One may go without food or water, but not without daily discipline of divine worship. He showed this through example and precept. The blessings of God should be sought everyday. It is a must for enlightenment. The appropriate prayer to God, according to the Paramāchārya, is to ask for the happiness of all. The Upaniṣadic *mantra* best represents this. *''Sarve Sukhinaḥ Santu, Sarve Santu nirāmayāh, Sarve Bhadrāni paśyantu, ma Kaschit dukha bhāg bhavet''*[4]. Roughly translated and paraphrased into English the verse quoted above means. ''Let all be happy; let all be healthy; let all see the auspicious; let no one be misrable''. The Paramāchārya worked for a strong and resurgent Hinduism and always had in his mind the betterment of the world. At all costs, ancient wisdom, that is *Dharma* should be preserved.

In the view of the Paramāchārya, no man is wicked by nature, but circumstances compel him to be so. Upbringing also adds to the stock. One should not be impatient with the so called wicked. Sympathy and compassion should be shown for them. ''Let me seek the same Self in the wicked man. Let me not hate him''[5].

VII

Now the Paramāchārya's views on religion may be discussed. According to him, religion is the way to inward peace. There is peace in unity and what leads to unity is religion[6]. The *Bījamantra* of Advaita as religion is *Samanvaya* (harmony). It highlights and heralds the idea of the spirit of acceptance. It whole heartedly welcomes and accepts what is regarded as truth in other religions. Acceptance is not because of fear or lack of knowledge; it is radical acceptance, knowing fully well the truth of other religions. And acceptance goes with rights. That is, all religions have equal rights and shares in Truth. And acceptance is not willy-nilly but loving affirmation of unity. In other words we should not be cynical of the salvation motive of different religions. The Paramāchārya discouraged the rivalries between different religions. He strongly pleaded for interreligious understanding. He ardently advocated the existence and copresence of all religions. He held dear to his heart enlighted religiosity. He was against religious conversions, as the God of all religions is one. In his clear words. "To ask a man to give up his old Religion is infact, to ask him to give up the God whom he worshipped. It is a sin against God"[7]. Inward transformation of the individual automatically leads to the establishment of a better world which is characterized by catholic vision. Unity is the common ideal that is found in all religions. All religions should get united in rejoining over the idea of the supremacy of God. Why should there be different religions at all ? The Paramāchārya says that the tastes of people are different *(Loko Vibhinna Ruchiḥ)* and hence, they follow different religions. But there should not be any room for religious fanaticism. Religions should strive for unity and not uniformity. Dispelling ignorance should be the main object of all religions. The teachings of the Paramāchārya thus exalt and ennoble the lives of all people. For him like Śaṅkara, the entire universe is a family, *'Vasudhaiva Kutuṁbakaṁ'*.

Religion, in the Hindu context is called *Dharma*. And it is held in great reverence as it sustains Society and the individual. The Paramāchārya regards *Dharma* as a means to *Mokṣa* if it is followed without desiring fruit.[8] *Dharma* is not only a duty but also a means to *Mokṣa*. The Paramāchārya lays emphasis on duty. Without performing our duty, we cannot gain freedom from action. The aim is to attain a state of actionlessness by performing action. By doing so we can become eligible to obtain God's grace whereupon supreme good is attained.

Advaita, thus, is the life mission of the Paramāchārya. It has no quarrel with any religion or faith. Every one is included in its wide compass. Other religions may quarrel with Advaita; but in turn, Advaita is not.

Sometimes this stand of Paramāchārya on God is criticized. In Advaita system, strictly speaking, God is not the highest reality. It is only an apperance. The highest reality is *Nirguṇa* Brahman and since God is relational, it is relegated to a lower position. In the light of this, it is wrong to over emphasize the need for God's grace in attaining *Mokṣa*. So goes the criticism. The Paramāchārya is not prepared to accept this criticism. He would simply dismiss it is purely theoretical and dry. For all practical purposes Brahman is God and it manifests itself as the world. Though plurality is not real, it is not that it is not useful. We have to reach the ideal of Advaita through Dvaita. He says "The frail mind go from the concrete to the abstract, from the forms of God in images to God without form"[9]. As Paramāchārya beautifully puts it, even the Advaitic outlook, one gains, through the grace of God.

VIII

The next question to be considered is : how to preserve *Dharma*. The answer of Paramāchārya is quick and direct. By following its tenents and practices. In his clear words : "If our religion is in danger, it is not because of other religions. On the contrary, it is due to the lack of religious practices on our side"[10]. He continues : "If we scrupulously adhere to the religious practices someone among us will become, perfect and that the presence of one perfect human is strength and solace to others, who live with him or her and religion will be taken care of"[11]. The way to strength which is long and hard lies through moral and scriptural practices *Anuṣṭhana*'"[12].

The Paramāchārya, here puts more emphasis on preserving the essence of Vedic religion as it enables an individual to lead a disciplined life. Vedic religion is interested in making man perfect and for this it calls upon every individual to perform one's duties (Karmānuṣṭhana) to cultivate cardinal virtues *(Śila)*, to worship the deity (Upāsana); and to acquire wisdom *(Jñāna)*. For all this, mind should be purified.

IX

Now, the social perspective of the Paramāchārya may be outlined. Advaita as religion, is interested in exploring the highest value in every individual. The highest value is called *Mokṣa* or liberation. It acts, according to the Paramāchārya, as a basis of social action. Due to ignorance man identifies himself with body and that is the starting point of all misery. *Mokṣa* consists in renouncing this false identification. The individual then comes out of the meshes of *Saṁsāra* and realizes his true nature as *Satchidānanda*.

Thus liberation of the self is the *Summum Bonum* of life accordinng to the Paramāchārya. This, however does not mean that in Advaita Vedānta there is no concern for social ethics and development. Advaita certainly attaches great significances to social ethics and moral development. This is very much stressed by the Paramāchārya when he says that our life, right from the vedas, has really cared for social relevance. It has always concentrated on *Dharma* which is the very basis of Society. Dharma ordains individuals to lead a good life, which in turn gives *Abhyudaya*, or Social welfare. *Abhyudaya* consists in the effective control and development of the individual. *Niśreyasa* or self realisation goes side by side with *Dharma* as it is an ingradient of *Dharma*. One who realizes both *Abhyudaya* and *Niśreyasa* becomes the spiritual leader of Society. Under his farsightedness and able guidance the social life of the individual gets elated and elevated. There takes place transvaluation of all social values with orientation of *Mokṣa,* the *Summum bonum,* avers the Paramāchārya.

The Advaitic concepts like *Sādhana Catuṣṭaya, Brahmātmaikya Jñāna* have important social significance. Properly analysed they point to the social wellbeing of man. The Paramāchārya was fond of quoting *Īśa* upaniṣad. "Enjoy life with a spirit of detachment" One should remain in the world judiciously enjoying it, at the same time he should remain untouched by it. He should invariably work, but with a sense of detachment. The real happiness consists in denying the ego. The social thought of the Hindu tradition believes in owning the whole world but not in owning the ego. The teaching of the Paramāchārya is no exception to this. One should renounce, not life, but selfishness in the interest of *Niśreyas* the highest ideal. Brahman which is termed *niranjana* is none other than the individual self. Hence both *abhyudaya* and *niśreyasa* are accommodated duly in Advaita vedānta. Tyāga or renunciation of the petty self is the fulcrum of the social philosophy of the Paramāchārya. In his explicit words, "Give to others, and this alone is *tyāga.* This is what the veda teaches everywere. One should in a spirit of supreme renunciation, abandon the fruit of an action for the good of others by saying "na Mama" (not mine, not for me). This is what our Veda teaches us"[13].

X

What has the Paramāchārya to say about *Verṇadharma* and *Varṇāśrama Dharmas,* the major social concepts of Hindu life ? The Paramāchārya lost no time to pointout that *Varṇāśrama dharma* is very basis of Hindu society. The literal meaning of the word *Varṇa* is, to choose or select, Depending upon the dominance of the *trigunas* namely *Sattva, rajas* and *tamas*, one's *Varṇa* is going to be determined. The Paramāchārya is bent upon saying that *Varṇadharma* should never be equated with *Jāti*, which has divided and sub-divided society into small nonharmonious disintegrating segments. In addition to *Varṇadharma* or *Viśeṣadharma*. Hindu philosophy also vehemently postulates and advocates what are called *Sādhāraṇa dharmas* or common duties to be followed by all members of society irrespective of their *Varṇa*, like *Satya* (truth), *Ahiṁsa* (Non-violence) *Karuṇa* (kindness) etc., The common duties presuppose the Advaitic base, that is, the unity of all human beings.

Āśrama dharma is a carefully designed frame work primarily put forward and advocated by Hinduism, keeping individual liberation in mind. The literal meaning of the work *Āśrama* is to put effort' or to halt at regular intervals in preparation to reach a higher stage in life. Roughly they may be called 'stages in life' by following which the individual is led regularly to the highest and namely *mokṣa*. The four stages of life are *Brahmacharya* (that of a student) *Gārhastya* (that of a house-holder). *Vānaprasthan* (that of a forest dweller) and *Saṅyasa* (that of a wandering monk). Each stage is equally important, providing the necessary requirement to climb the next higher stage in the ladder of life and finally getting one self released from the cycle of birth and death *(Mokṣa)*. The *Sannyāsins* are well above narrow considerations of caste and class. They are classless individuals. They are not parasites of society. In the words of the Paramāchārya; ''There is a wrong view that *Sannyāsins* are parasites of society, because they do not do 'productive work'. It is said that they do not contribute to national wealth and like beggars they prey upon society. A true *Sannyāsin* lives in communion with the spirit, acquires *Śānti* (peace) and sets the tone of the spiritual life of the community. He is the exemplar of the highest values of life and as such is an asset to society''[14]. While laying emphasis on *sannyasa*, Advaita takes care to pointout that the importance of other three *āsramas* should not be lost sight of.

What is true *mokṣa* ? According to the Paramācharya, it is not a post mortem state. It is the eternal nature of the self. *Jivanmukti* is the true mukti. It is the realisation of Brahman-knowledge experienced in one's own heart, while bearing a body.[15] The Paramāchārya is happy to note that Śaṅkara's message is all comprehensive and soul-making. It is at once remarkable. He extols the importance of Śaṅkara to the trouble torn world and the relevance of his massage. He says; ''If one wishes to know the real one should study the Ācharya's works ... Is it possible to measure his greatness ?[16].

When do acts become sinful ? When *Sādhāraṇa dharmas* are ignored. Also when actions are performed for selfish interests avers the Paramāchārya. He advises the devotees ''Let love be the sole motive''. Passions such as desire and hatred, anger and malice must be totally eschewed, If love becomes the guiding principle of all deeds then most of the ills of the world will vanish. The Paramāchārya was such a great *saint* that mere uttering of his sacred name is suffice to purify and sanctify man's life. He was himself a living scripture.

XI

In what does consist the necessity of moral and spiritual discipline ? The Paramāchārya asserts that it is for attaining *mokṣa*. He asks his followers to treat this life as the last one. One should perform *niṣkāmakarma* and put maximum effort, so that one overcomes next birth. In other words, in this life itself one should strive to get liberated from the fetters of *saṁsāra*. For that self-control, self-help and self-culture should take a front seat. They are very essential for self development. Vedānta, the peak of the Vedas and teaches the way for the removal of sorrow. If there is another, there is desire, hatred, fear etc., If there is no Second, then there is no hatred no fear etc. Secondless reality thus is the basis of the whole world.

XII

Regarding sainthood misconceptions galore. One such misconception is that the saints are uncommon and supernormal. They are indifferent to pricking realities of life. In one word, they are super-individualistic.[17]

This is not true to the core as far as the Paramāchārya was concerned. He was an embodimant of love, kindness and compassion. He was a self-controlled *puruṣa.* He was the same in pain and pleasure. He was friendly and at the same time fearless.

There is another question. It is related to performance of miracles. Should miracles and sainthood go together ? This is a difficult question to answer. The popular view is that a saint should perform at least some miracles. They should exhibit some supernatural and supernormal powers. It is believed that in the life of some saints such miracles as walking on water, sitting on fire, cooling flames, walking upwards in the sky, performing alchemy etc., are seen.

But this is only from the side of devotees. To expect every saint to perform a miracle is a misconception. Infact a true saint does not attach importance to such supernatural powers.Often he considers them as hindrances in the way of spiritual progress. The devotees should guard themselves against, such circus acts so the saints themselves warn. The saints, on the other hand are virtuous. They are liberal minded. Compassion is the princely virtue with them. They are the fit instruments of social service.[19] They belong to all mankind. They have inspired social reform. They are the embodiments of God's vision and all the good in life. In them there is the confluence of head and heart. They lead a dedicated and unselfish life. They have wisdom, devotion and self-control. Love is the centre of their life.

XIII

The question remains. What miracle did the Paramāchārya perform ? Not the populist but an inner one, in my view. And that consists in his mastery over the fund of knowledge found in the body of Vedānta; and in his fulfilling the ideal of Guru as enunciated by Sri Śaṇkara. ''Who is a guru? He who has realised the Truth and who is always intent on the disciple's good''. The Paramāchārya lived upto this ideal without leaving even an iota of doubt. He fulfilled the noble spiritual mission entrusted to him by Sri Śaṇkara. Through inner awakening he championed the cause of human development. His life was a ceaseless and untiring effort at stabilizing and promoting the spirit of India. It can be said that he has moved the world one step further towards spiritual development - could there be any other miracle higher than this?

The Paramāchārya, to conclude, served as a beacon of light for the spiritual guidance of all devotees. He was a *Jīvanmukta*. He was bent on uplifting *Dharma*. He was looked upon with utmost veneration for the penance he did for the lokakalyāṇa. The Sri Kānchi Kāmkoti Pītha and the guru shed lustre on each other. He lived the most complete simplistic life. He had a saving grace. He had intense concern for the lowliest and the last. His life was a saga of untiring dedication to the holy-task of fulfilling the lofty spiritual mission of Humanism. Like Lord Dakshinamurthy he realised truth as a *mouni* (observer of truth in silence), but when he spoke it was from the level of inward experience. He was the replica, so to say, of ancient wisdom. In short, he was a person of perfect selfdetachment, a *mahapuruṣa* of unbounded love.

NOTES

1. T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Ten Saints of India* (Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965) Preface.
2. T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Preceptor of Advaita* (Secunderabad : Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Sankar Mandir, 1968) P 490.
3. Quoted by Prof. R. Balasubramanian in *The Voice of Sankara* (Madras : Special No. Vol. 18, No. 1, Jan. 1993) P123
4. The popular upanisadic *Śānti mantra.*
5. T.M.P. Mahadevan Ibid P. 535
6. R. Balasubramanian, Ibid P 171
7. Quoted by R. Balasubramanian, Ibid, P 124.
8. R. Balasubramanian, Ibid, P 171
9. Quoted by R. Balasubramanian, Ibid, P 126
10. Ibid P. 172
11. Ibid
12. Ibid
13. Ibid P 132
14. Ibid P 125
15. *Brahma Sutras. IV-1-15*

16. *Preceptors of Advaita* quoted by T.M.P. Mahadevan, Introduction.

17. T.M.P. Mahadevan, *'Ten Saints of India'* Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan 1965) P. 17.

18. Ibid P. 17.

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Book-Reviews

1

Selections from Mahabharat : Reaffirming Gita's call for the good of all, written by Dr. Satya P. Agarwal; *Publishers Urmila Agarwal,* 11293, Ridemark Row, Columbia, Maryland 21044 USA. *Distributors : Motilal Banarasidass, 41, UA Bungalow Rd, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007; Pages : 298, Price Rs. 395/-, I Edition 2002.*

The author is a Social Scientist with a brilliant academic record as well as notable professional achievements in India. USA and United nations. His academic honours include five gold medals numerous merit scholarships and research fellowships at various universities. The compressive book that he wrote in 1993 - The social role of the Gita. How and Why - confirmed his reputation as a Gita scholar and researcher specializing in Loka-Sangraha that is the good of the society.

The present book conveys the social message of Maha Bharat in the form of a ten-point call for the good of all, the message being valid for all times and has special significance because of the present growth of militant terrorism all over the world.

The book classifies Mahabharat into two broad categories viz., (1) account of tales of the long conflict between Pandavas and Kauravas and (2) Dialogues of talks on issues of Dharma i.e. the principles and practices that hold the society together. The emphasis is on the second part as the message to be conveyed is socio religious directed towards the human society as a whole. The material for this purpose is derived mainly from the seven parvas (out of eighteen) viz., Vana-parva,Udyoga parva, Santi parva, Anushasan parva, Ashvamedh parva, Mahaprasthan parva and Swargarohan parva.

In the Vanaparva, three Ṛṣis (Brihadaśva, Lomaśa and Markaṇḍeya) narrate to Yudhisthira a large number of religious stories and the famous Yudhisthira's dialogue with Yaksha told by Vaishampayan.

In the Udyoga parva, the preparation for war goes hand in hand with the dialogues, which bring out the difference between spirituality and materialism. Arjuna seeks Krishna alone on his side as against Duryodhana opting out for the army of Krishna without Krishna when the two visit Shrikrishna at his place. At this, Dhrtarashtra gets worried and listens to Vidura's advice called ''Vidura-niti'' (advice based on Morality and justice). On Dhratarashtra's expression of desire to continue the advice, Vidura suggests the name of Ṛṣis Sanat Sujata, the immortal son of Brahma to give further advice to the king. His advice is based on the highest spiritual knowledge, through Vedantic philosophy. The important and very appealing speech of Shri Krishna with a strong desire for peace in the assembly and moved by compassion for Kauravas beseaching the monarch and trying to persuade him to control the unrighteousness of Duryodhana, is given here.

Śānti parva is the longest parva in the Mahabharata, accounting for nearly one fifth of the entire epic. Comprehensive coverage is given to the dialogue between Bhīshma and Yudhisthira. The long dialogue is formed of three parts - (1) Raja dharma i.e. the dharma (duty) of Kings. (2) Apad-dharma (dharma adjusted to difficult circumstances) and (3) Moksha-dharma (dharma leading to Moksha or salvation) the principles being explained through stories.

The Anushasan-parva is continuation of the dialogue in Śānti parva with most of the application belonging to the practical side of dharma, one of which is charity with its various motivations as well as attainment of spirituality and obtaining heaven or hell.

The Ashwamedh-parva has been accorded, by Gita lovers, a special place in Mahabharata, next only to Bhishma parva. While Bhagawadgeeta contains the teachings given directly by Krishna to Arjuna, we have in Mahabharat the Anu-gita which gives the teaching for the second time directly to Arjuna by Krishna before he returns to Dwaraka after the war. There is reference to Kāma-geeta of this parva.

The Mahāprasthānika parva has two important Dialogues (1) between Yudhisthir and Bheema (Bheema asking Yudhisthira why one falls down one by one on their journey till he also falls down) and (2) between Yudhisthira, on the one hand, and Indra and Dharmaraj on the other. The occasion for both the dialogues was the great departure of the five Pandavas and Droupadi on foot to the high mountains leading to heaven's entrance after having installed Parikshita on the throne. With a view to testing Yudhisthira's adherence to the suitable principles of righteousness, Dharmaraja assumes the form of a dog to become the seventh member of the walking team.

Finally in the Svargarohana-parva Dharmaraja tests Yudhisthira's righteousness for the third time in the epic by the illusions created by Indra and asking him the questions, which are replied in a most satisfactory manner by Yudhisthira.

The last part of the book summerizes as well as illustrates by verses, point by point, how the Mahabharata supports Gita's ten point call for the good of all.

The book is highly scholarly and lucidly written to explain the overall purpose of Bhagwadgeeta and Mahabharat for the good of the whole humanity and to build a terror free society.

- P. D. Dharwarkar

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-2-

Religious doctrines in the Mahabharata; author : Nicholas Sutton; *Publishers : Motilal Banarasidass P. Ltd., 41, U.A. Bunglow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007; Pages 477; Price : Cloth bound Rs. 395/-; Paper Rs. 250/-; I Edition 2000.*

The Mahabharat, though widely known as an epic text that recounts the exploits of heroes, gods and villains of the great Mahabharat war which was fought about 3100 to 3200 years B.C. as per Indian chronology, as also for the exploits of the central figure Bhagwan Shri Krishna known as incarnation of Lord Vishnu, it is also a repository of the principal religious doctrines of the great Indian Civilization, later known as Hindu Religion.

The scholarly study propounded in the book, without any preconceived theory of overall meaning, delineates the major themes of religious idealogy offered by the great epic in a way that does justice to the rich variety of material in its content. It thus functions on one level as a catalogue of doctrines, indicating where specific religious ideas are presented in the epic, in a manner that allows all sections equal merit whether they may be a part of the central narrative or the deductive interludes that punctuate the principal story.

This study further offers an analysis of the epic's teachings by seeking to identify its principal doctrinal tendencies and the specific answers it gives to major questions of religious thinking such as nature of God, the path of salvation, cosmic and personal eschatology, ethics and organisation of society and the authority of scripture. It thus allows the epic's text to speak in its own terms and justice is done to the genuine diversity of perspectives contained in the various sections. Ultimately it is recognised that whilst it is legitimate to speak of "epic thought" in the general sense, Mahabharata represents above all the rich diversity of Hindu religious ideas. It does not have merely one ideology or one aim or one doctrinal posture, but allows various concepts and systems of thought to exist alongside each other, challanging the reader to accept diversity rather than a rigid creed and to explore rather than resolve the inevitable tension existing in the varied human responses to the phenomenon of religion.

The authorship of Mahabharata been the subject of much debate amongst western scholars. The traditional view is that it is the work of Vyāsa, who in later Hinduism is identified as a appearing to compile and arrange the Vedas and other Sacred works which include the Purāṇas. It is notable, however, the more recent work tended to move towards the view that the form of the text as it holds now, is not a random pieced together, but is the careful composition of a final redactor or redactors.

In analysing the teachings of Mahabharat, extensive use of Bhagwadgeeta is unavoidable as it presents the principal didactic passage of the epic in which both the narrative and bulk of didactus are directly confronted, as expressed by the author. The principles of Pravruthi, Nivruthi, and Bhakti are analysed in detail and in comparison and relation to the society structure.

The epic is divided into eighteen major sections termed as parvas, beginning with Adi Parvan, containing 225 chapters, the cycle of myths leading upto king Janmejaya's snake sacrifice at which Mahabharat is first spoken by Vaishanpayan, a disciple of Vyasa. This is followed by Sabha Parvan (72 chapters), Udyoga parvan (197 chapters), the Bhishma Parvan (117 chapters), the Drona parvan (173 chapters), Karna parvan (69 chapters), Śalya Parvan (64 chapters) telling of the final stages of the war with Yudhisthir killing Śalya and Bheema, killing Duryodhan. The Sauptika Parvan (18 chapters) tells of the massacre in the Pandava camp by three survivors of Kaurava host and the Stree parvan (27 chapters) describes the lamentation of the women. The Santi Parvan (353 chapters) is comprised of numerous didactic treatises covering a range of religious and Philosophical perspectives. The Anushasan Parvan (154 chapters), Ashwamedhika Parvan (96 chapters), Ashramavasika Parvan (47 chapters), Mausala Parvan (9 chapters, Maha prasthanika Parvan (3 chapters) and final Swargarohan parvan (5 chapters). All these are critically examined and analysed by the author to seek the teachings of the epic.

Dr. Nicholas Sutton has moved from theology successfully to Indology. He has contributed a number of articles on the Hindu epics and is currently working on English transalation of passages of Moksha-dharma parvan of the Mahabharata. Dr. Sutton is lecturer in Eastern Religions at Edge Hill University College in Lancashire, England.

The book is very scholarly, highly analytical and provides an independent perspective on Hindu Religious thought and needs a worthy place in all libraries on theological and religious philosophy.

- P. D. Dharwarkar

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-3-

Glimpses of Jnaneshwari by *M. R. Paranjape*, published by *S. R. Rairikar, Hon. Secretary, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Pune Kendra, Pune 411 016*, pages 128, Price Rs. 100/-, First Edition : June 2002.

The book is written by the author to bring out the fact that Sant Dnyaneshwar's teachings have an universal approach for the betterment and happiness of the whole of humanity as well as helping the individual to reach self-realisation and God realisation as the final goals.

The difference between Bhagwadgeeta and Dnyaneshwari is that Sant Dnyaneshwar has explained many terse edicts of Bhagwadgeeta in great details even running into many pages, because of his wide experience in attainment of yoga, and its various stages.

Many authors of Dnyaneshwari have tried to look into these teahings, the real meaning of words employed by Sant Dnyaneshwar and the inner import of the teachings giving practical implications.

The author has tried to pick out such portions of Dnyaneshwari and give detailed explanations with philosophical and other literary background information.

The reader will find the book interesting and enable him the arrive at the real import of some of the different difficult portions of Dnyaneshwari.

- P. D. Dharwarkar

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Activities of A.C.P.R.

Quarterly Report for the period ending 30-06-2003

I) LECTURES AND PROGRAMMES HELD FROM 1-4-2003 to 30-6-2003.

1) Chaitnya Pradeep Trust Belgaum organised a lecture programme of Shri Swami Chidrupanand Saraswati, Hubli on the Topic of 'Geeta Philosophy' from 13-4-2003 to 15-04-2003.

2) Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion organised 'Satsang' Programme of Swadhyayee Sou. Chanchalatai Punekar, Belgaum on the eve of Shri Gurudev Dr. R. D. Ranade Maharaj's Punyatithi on 6.6.2003.

II) WE WELCOME FOLLOWING NEW SUBSCRIBERS TO PATHWAY TO GOD JOURNAL.

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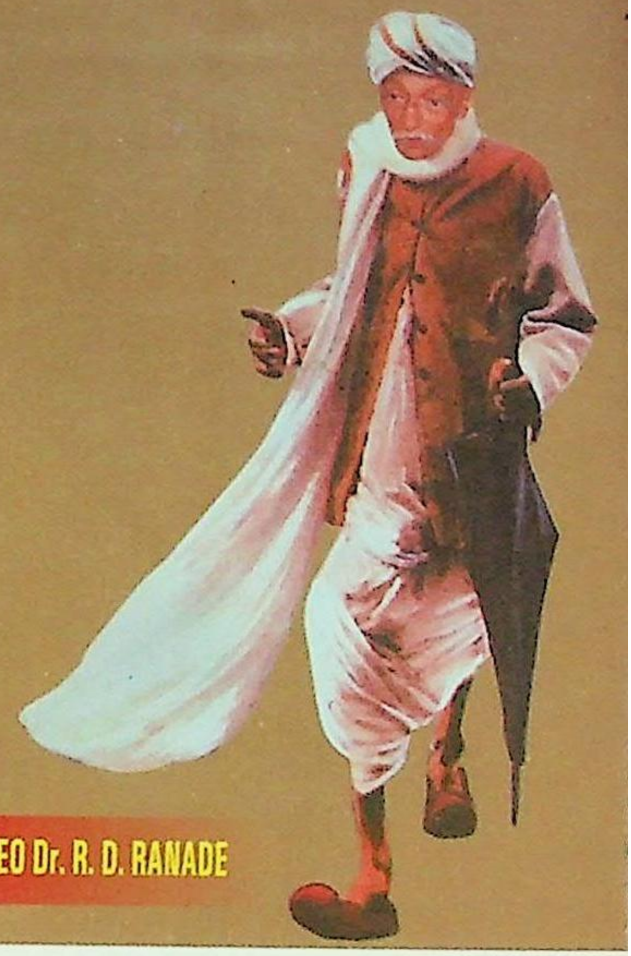

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